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COMPREHENSIVE TEST-BAN TREATY

Letter dated 16 June 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In Australia's capacity as Chair of the South Pacific Forum, I have the honour to bring to your attention the enclosed statement issued on 15 June 1995 by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. P. J. Keating, MP, Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, on behalf of the South Pacific Forum Heads of Government, on the resumption of nuclear testing by France.

I request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 65 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Richard BUTLER, AM

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ANNEX

Statement on the resumption of nuclear testing by France, issued at Canberra on 15 June 1995 by the Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. P. J. Keating MP

On behalf of South Pacific Forum Heads of Government as current Chair of the Forum, I condemn France's decision to resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

Individual Forum Governments have already issued statements and protests that reflect the depth of their disappointment. The immediate widespread public antagonism to France's decision right across the South Pacific reflects the resentment felt by our peoples.

Forum Heads of Government understand and share these feelings. On their behalf, I express our unequivocal opposition to France's decision.

The statements that have been issued by other nuclear Powers, and by other countries in Asia and in other parts of the world are welcome. Forum leaders hope that France will hear and take note of what the world is saying.

France has exercised a choice about the nature of its engagement in the South Pacific. Forum members had welcomed the improved relations between France and countries in the region. France's decision is a major setback to this trend which was partly founded on its 1992 moratorium on nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

The wider implications of France's decision are also of deep concern to Forum Heads of Government.

France's decision undermines the outcome of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The decision is particularly regrettable in the light of agreement reached at that Conference, including by France, that negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty should be completed by no later than 1996 and that, pending such a treaty, nuclear-weapon States would exercise the utmost restraint.

The South Pacific Forum remains strongly committed to a comprehensive test-ban treaty as a key step in global efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and eventually to eliminate nuclear weapons. It offers the prospect of ending testing completely - in the South Pacific as elsewhere. The Heads of Government have noted President Chirac's commitment that France would sign such a treaty. They will hold France to that commitment.

The Heads of Government also call upon France to abide by the protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty.

I am in contact with my fellow Heads of Government about arrangements for a Forum delegation to convey to the French Government the depth of the Forum's concern. I envisage that the delegation would be led by the Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Evans.

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